Section 9: Overview:

In this section, I'm going to cover the correlation between site speed and rankings. I'm going to show you how you can test your website's page speed using a free online tool. I'm going to get into different web hosting and server solutions there are out there. And lastly, the most important element, I'm going to show you exactly how you can speed up your WordPress website in a live walkthrough.

Section 9: The Correlation Between Site Speed And Rankings:

How many times have you searched for something on Google, clicked the result, and then had to wait for ages for the page to load? I'm pretty sure you just raised your hand. Waiting ages for a page to load isn't fun at all. Nine times out of 10 we all end up getting really bored and going back to the search results to find another website.

Google's view on page speed is exactly the same. Google doesn't want slow loading websites on page one as it results in a poor user experience, which if you think about it makes complete sense. If everyone using Google has to constantly wait ages to get information, then eventually people end up going elsewhere and using another search engine such as Bing for example. If everyone did that, then less people would spend money on running Google ads, because why bother when the majority of people are using another search engine.

Google needs to ensure everyone has a great user experience when using their platform as it's in their best interests. One of the things that can cause a bad user experience is slow websites. As a result, Google has been tackling this for a while now. Site speed has been a direct ranking factor since 2010. Google has also confirmed this in a webmaster central blog. The general thought is that a website should load within three seconds. If your site takes longer to load than three seconds, then it can have a negative impact on your rankings.

This is why it's super important to ensure you have a fast loading website. In the next video, I'll show you how you can test your website speed to figure out if you're above or below that three second figure.

Section 9: How To Test Your Websites Page Speed:

So now you understand the importance of page speed and that the magic number is three seconds, it's time to figure out how long it takes your website to load. So we can do this very easily using a free online tool called GTmetrix. So simply head over to gtmetrix.com and you'll land on a page that looks similar to this. Once you're on this page, you want to simply enter your website into this box at the top and then click analyze.

However, before you do that, I just want to share with you a pro tip. If you actually sign up and create a free account, you can actually change your browser location. So your browser location

is basically the location this tool is going to test your site speed from, so level finish is obviously targeting the U.S. and currently the browser location is set to Vancouver in Canada.

This won't be a true reflection of how long my site takes to load, so what I want to do is change that to the right location. So like I said, if you create an account, you can actually change this location. So I'm going to find one in the U.S., which I've just got Dallas right here.

I'm going to check if there's any more. Okay, I've got China, UK, India, Australia, Brazil. Okay, so that's fine. So I'm going to go with Dallas, as that is the only one based in the U.S. So once I've done that, I'm not going to worry about the rest, I'm simply going to click analyze.

So what GTmetrix is going to do now, it's going to go out, and pretend the browser is actually going to be in Dallas in the U.S., and it's going to visit my site and see how long it takes to load. So let's wait for the information to come through now. So as you can see, the information is now populated and it took my site 1.4 seconds to load. So that is really good, as that is below three seconds, so we have nothing to worry about.

This tool is actually really good, as well, as it tells you what you're doing really well and what you can work on. So, essentially, when you see A, it means I hit 100%. So, for example, enable compression, you scored 100% on this recommendation. Nothing to do here. So all my files are compressed, which is really good. They have given me 100% for that.

However, if you scroll to the top, you can see I've got an F grade, I've got a B, and a B. So I wouldn't really worry about these because I'm well within three seconds, however, if your site time is maybe eight or nine seconds, I would definitely look at the things you can do to improve. However, like I said, for me it's not really an issue as my site does load fast.

Another pro tip, as well, is that you want to retest this, I would say, another two times. So try and get three figures for your website as sometimes information can be a little bit inaccurate. If you test it three times and then take the average, that will give you a true reflection of how long it takes for your site to load.

So I'm going to retest this now and just make sure I'm still around about the 1.4 seconds. Now, I might go up to 1.8, I might drop. It doesn't really matter as long as I don't see like nine seconds here, for example, in the second test, then I have nothing to worry about. So again, I've got 2.3 seconds. That is still well under three seconds.

I'm going to do one more retest, just to make sure the last number is still going to be under three seconds. Again, the more times you test it, the more reliable your information is going to be. So I do recommend you test it at least three times when it comes to plugging your website in. So as you can see, the third result has just come in now and it's 2.2 seconds. So, again, that is well under three seconds and nothing to worry about at all, guys. Okay, let's dive into the next section of website hosting and servers.

Section 9: Web hosting and servers:

Web hosting and Servers. When it comes to site speed, your web host and server location are super, super important. We worked with a client a couple of years ago who was using a poor hosting company and on average their site was taking 12 seconds to load, which is insane. No one wants to wait 12 seconds for a site to load. We carried out a comprehensive SEO campaign and managed to get the site on page one within 12 months. However, as soon as they got there and they started to generate some clicks to the site, within a couple of weeks time, Google pushed them back down to page seven. The reason why is because their bounce rate was through the roof. Bounce rate meaning the amount of people who clicked their site and then hit the back button on the browser to go back to the search results. Google must've thought the site was poor as people always ended up going back to search results to find another website, when in reality, users never even saw the website.

They all just got too impatient to wait for the site to load and as result went back to Google to find another website. This is why it's super important to make sure you're using the right hosting solution. Otherwise, all that hard work you've put in to get to page one will go to waste as soon as you get there. You'll be pleased to know we relayed this information back to the client. They changed the host and the load time went down to 1.9 seconds and even to this date they still remain on page one. When it comes to picking a hosting solution for your website, I'm going to show you the free companies that I recommend.

The first company is called Cloudways and this is actually the company we use to host our agency site Clickslice. And as you can see from our website, it is super fast. Actually the blog loads straight away, I click an article, it loads straight away. Again, super, super fast. If you do want to see how fast our site is, just go over to Google, search for Clickslice and then play around on our site. That will give you a good feeling just to show you how fast our website actually is. So Cloudways, they give you a free SSL certificate as well, which is really good. They also give you a free migration.

So if you're currently using a different hosting solution, Cloudways will actually move your site over to Cloudways for you for free and you don't have to do anything. So it's a really good option as it makes the whole process for you a little bit easier. So their prices start from $10 per month and that'd be the most basic server. To be fair, this is more than enough. This is actually the package we have for Clickslice, and like I said, you can see how fast our site is. Everything loads super, super fast. And for us that is more than fine. You can obviously upgrade and go for an Amazon server or Google cloud server for example, but they are a little bit more expensive, so it all comes down to your budget.

The second hosting company I recommend is one called SiteGround. You might have seen them before. They actually have a solution, just for WordPress websites. They do have free options in total, the StartUp, the Grow Big and the GoGeek. I actually recommend you'd go for the middle one, which is actually their best seller. The reason why I recommend you go for the Grow Big and not the StartUp is because it has what we call dynamic caching. So caching is

super important and I'm actually going to go through that in a bit more depth in the next video, but essentially when you have caching on your website, it allows your website to load even faster. So if you go for SiteGround, this is what I recommend. This package right here under the WordPress hosting URL. So it's a little bit cheaper than Cloudways.

And lastly, the third company I recommend is a company called SeekaHost. The main reason I recommend this website is because one, it's super cheap. They start from $2.50 per month. So less than $3, and you also get the SSL certificate as well. And on top of that, the person who actually owns this hosting company is actually a former SEO himself, which means he already understands the importance of site speed and things like that, which in theory means he should have a good understanding of things like site speed and stuff like that, which should make our process a little bit easier. So these are the free companies, I recommend SeekaHost, SiteGround and Cloudways.

Section 9: How To Speed Up Your WordPress Website - Part 1:

How to improve your website's page speed. As you will already know, page speed is super important for SEO and having a slow loading website can have a negative effect on your rankings. As well as a negative impact on your rankings, a slow website can also cause a drop in activity from users on your website.

Here are three astonishing facts on how having a slow website can really affect you. For example, a one-second delay in page load times yields 11% fewer page views, 16% decrease in customer satisfaction and a 7% loss in conversions. Crazy, right? Hopefully, these stats reinforce the reasons why you should avoid having a slow website.

So now we know we want to avoid having a slow website, it's time to look at the four most impactful things you can do to speed up your website. How to speed up your website. Number one, reduce image sizes. Images bring life to your content and help boost engagement. Researchers have found that adding coloured visuals make people 80% more likely to read your content. However, if your images aren't optimized, they could be hurting more than helping. In fact non-optimized images are one of the most common issues we see with beginner WordPress websites.

However, optimizing each image before you upload it is a tedious and long process. Luckily there are a few image compression plugins out there which make the whole process very easy and quick. The three worth mentioning are EWWW Image Optimizer, Smush and Optimole. Using any of these three plugins will drastically reduce your image sizes, thus improving the speed of your website. Let's head over to our WordPress dashboard and I'll show you a live example of how we can optimize a site using EWWWW Image Optimizer which is my personal favorite.

So I'm now over on my WordPress dashboard and I want to go over to plugins and then click Add New. So like I said, my favorite plugin is actually the first one, EWWW Image Optimizer, so

I'm simply going to give that a search on the plugins within WordPress and as you can see, it's going to be this first one right here by exactly EWWW. This plugin is very popular. It has over 800,000 active installations and it is updated all the time.

So for example, for me at the time of making this video, this program was updated only seven days ago. Let's go ahead and click Install. And once it's installed, you want to go ahead and click Activate. So once that plugin has activated, you want to scroll down and go into the settings of the plugin like so. Settings right here. Give that a click and this will open all the options you have available for this plugin.

So as you can see, there's quite a few options which you can play around with. However, I actually only change one option. The standard configuration they give you out of the box is actually really, really good. So for example, on the basic tab, I don't actually change anything. I leave it how it is. I do go over to the easy mode tab and scroll down where it says lazy load and I make sure this box is checked. And as you can see, lazy load improves actual and perceived loading times as images will be loaded as they enter or are about to enter the viewpool.

Which essentially means if you go on a website and you have a big page like this, and then somewhere at the bottom of the page there's an image, that image is not going to load until the person scrolls down the page. So this is a very good feature. So if it's not already checked, give it a check and then click Save changes.

And to be honest, that is really the only messing around I do with this plugin. You can go into the advanced settings or the web P for example, and further compress images. For example, you can actually reduce the quality of the images on your site to compress them even further by using this box right here. However, I don't recommend that as I like to have the highest quality images on my website as it just makes my website look a bit more professional. However, if you really are struggling with your page load times, then you can obviously go ahead and check this box as well just to get a further compression and optimization.

So, as you can see, I've compressed my images roughly about 20%. You can go a bit further by using an API key. But honestly, I've never done that, and I've always gotten good results. So as you can see, it's very, very easy to use, which is why I'm such a big fan of it. So that is how you can reduce the images on your WordPress website.

Section 9:How To Speed Up Your WordPress Website - Part 2:

Another thing you can do to speed up your website reduces your HTTP request. Every time someone visits a page on your website, their browser pings your web server and requests the files that contain the content of the page. These files might include things such as HTML, CSS, JavaScript, images, icons, and so on, and so on. The request is called an HTTP request. HTTP, as we already know, stands for hypertext transfer protocol, and is basically the name for a browser, sending a request to the file, and then a server sending that file to the browser.

When the server receives a HTTP request from a user's browser, your server responds by sending the required files. The user's browser then renders the page. So why is it important to keep track of all your HTTP requests? As you can see from the image on the right, every time someone visits your website, their browser needs to make a separate HTTP request for every single file that needs to be rendered for the page they're visiting. If you have a minimalist site that doesn't have that many files, it won't take long to request and download your files. But this isn't the case of most websites, particularly the ones who have lots of images, animations, and other dynamic content.

By reducing a number of elements in your sites pages, you can minimize the number of HTTP requests that are required to render a webpage. This in turn will help speed up the load times for your website. But first you need to know how many HTTP requests your website is making. So let's head over to our browser now and I'll show you exactly how you can do this. So I'm now over on our homepage for Clickslice. And what we're going to do is check how many requests Clickslice's homepage has.

So to do this, you need to be using Google Chrome. As you can see, I'm using Google Chrome. So you simply want to right click anywhere on the page and then click inspect. This will open Chrome developer tools, which essentially provides you tons of information such as your network, including how many HTTP requests your website is making. So once you click Inspect, it should open a box like this.

Your box might be on the right hand side of the screen down here, it might look like this. If it does, I recommend you actually dock it to the bottom, which is very easy to do. You just come up to here and click the free icons, and then click Doc to Bottom. This will now move the whole thing down here.

So once you have this open, you want to go over and click Network and then you want to refresh your homepage or whatever page you're on on your website. And as you can see, this is now bringing through all these requests which are happening in the background. So there are currently 77 requests from Clickslice's homepage, which is a lot.

Whilst on this page we can also get a bit more information as well, such as the size of each request, such as how long it takes for each request to come through. And we also have a waterfall, which is essentially just a visual representation showing you how long it takes for each request to come through. But essentially the number you want to pay attention to is going to be the number down here, which has just gone up one more to 78.

This number is actually a little bit higher. I'm actually using lazy image load. So as I scroll down the page images are going to load, and as you can see this number is going up, 81, there's two more images down here. I believe you've got one here, and one here. As you can see, it's now gone up to 83, so if I wasn't using lazy image load, the number of requests on the load of the actual page will actually be a lot higher.

So it's a good idea to go through all of your requests and just see if you actually need them on your page. For example, if I go to the top of Clickslice's page, you can see that we've got these requests right here, which says Humana directs inner space loss, which essentially just logos we have on our homepage. Here's inner space loss and here's Humax Direct, Innerspace Lofts, essentially just logos we have on our homepage. Here's Innerspace Lofts, and here's Humax. So what I could do is actually remove some of these logos, thus reducing the amount of requests my website has to make, thus making it load faster.

However, do obviously bear in mind, don't just start removing everything from your site. For example, for me, we have these logos here for a reason, as it helped provide more social proof. You can also use a tool such as GT Metrics. So GT Metrics is a tool I showed you earlier on in this section of the course in the video titled How To Test Your Website's Page Speed. So within GT Metrics, once you plug in your URL and then run a test, it actually gives you a grade for tons of different things on your website.

So for me, I have a great F and it's to do with JavaScript. So if I click into that, I can see all of the HTTP requests, which my website is making in regards to JavaScript. I could then go through the list and remove all the ones which aren't necessary, which are slowing down my website. However, do be careful as a lot of the things here will actually be relevant to your website, and you will need to have them. So for me, I've got some Google reviews plugin, which I'm using. I do want my reviews on the homepage. However, if I want a faster site, then I simply need to remove that or optimize that by using a better plugin. There's also a few other things you can do such as minify JavaScript, which I'm going to show you how to do in the next video.

Section 9: How To Speed Up Your WordPress Website - Part 3:

How to speed up your website, number three. Minify JavaScript and CSS files. If you do on your website through GTmetrix, which I just showcased in the last video, then you will probably see tons of files that can be minified such as JavaScript files, CSS files, and even HTML files. Minifying essentially means reducing the number of CSS files and JavaScript calls and the size of those files too. Once you reduce the number of calls your website has to make, you can improve the site loading speed. Essentially, you want to minimize what's going on, on your website, so there are fewer files, thus reducing the time it takes for those files to load. It does sound more complex than it actually is to be fair. If you do know your way around WordPress themes, you can study the guides provided by Google and actually do some manual fixing.

If not, then don't worry, as there's tons of plugins you can use to help you achieve this goal. The most popular being Autoptimize. Autoptimize can help you optimize in your CSS JavaScript and even HTML files on your WordPress website. Let's head over to the backend of my website and I'll show you how you can install the plugin and set it all up. So I'm now over in the backend of my WordPress website, and I want to go to plugins, and then click add new, and simply search for the Autoptimize plugin. So let's go to the search bar, and paste in Autoptimize. And as you can see, this is a plugin we need. Autoptimize by Frank Goossens (futtta). This is what we

actually want as it is a premium plugin. We want the free versions. Let's go for Autoptimize, click install now, and then click activate.

So once the plugin is activated, do you want to go and click settings. This will take you into the main settings of the plugin page and for the JavaScript options, you want to make sure the top box is ticked, optimize JavaScript code, and then also double check you have this box ticked as well. Aggregate JavaScript files. Sometimes it isn't always clicked. For the best performance, you want to ensure that this box is ticked. So once you have the top two boxes ticked, you want to move down to the CSS options. For the options here for CSS, we want to tick the top one, optimize CSS code and the two below, it should also be ticked as well. Aggregate all links CSS files. This is really important. Make sure this is ticked. Same with the one below it as well. We also want to make sure we have this one ticked as well inline or CSS.

Once you have those four boxes ticked, you can move down to the next section, which is HTML options. Simply give this a click as well. We want to make sure we optimize all HTML code across the website. And then lastly, scroll down to the bottom section for miscellaneous. And as you can see, the top three boxes are already checked. This should be by default. However, if your boxes aren't ticked, do go ahead and click all three boxes, save aggregate scripts to CSS as static files. Yes, you want to do that, indeed. Minify excludes CSS and JavaScript files. And yes, this is also ticked, however, just a word of warning, do make sure you test this on your website first. For example, I do know some people have actually activated this box right here. They've clicked save changes, and then it's broken at their site. Not to worry if it does break your site, all you need to do is come back into the settings of Autoptimize and simply disable this.

If it does break your site, it could be to do with a conflict on your theme, or potentially some code you already have on your website. So like I said, if something does break your website, it's going to be this option right here. So if it does break your site, simply come back here, untick it, click save changes, and empty cache and you'll be good to go. I've already tested this on my website in the past, and for me it doesn't cause any issues, so I'm simply going to go ahead and click save changes and empty cache. If we go back to the top and then click images, you can also see we have the option to optimize our lazy load images. However, as we've already done this in the first video using the EWWW Image Optimizer plugin, we don't need to do it here.

EWWW Image Optimizer actually does a way better job than the additional feature we have in Autoptimize. So it makes sure that is not checked. You don't want to have it checked here. And then have another plugin which is also doing the same thing, as it's just going to cause more issues than good. So if you go over to the extra tab, you want to make sure for Google Fonts you have the bottom one selected, which combines and loads Fonts asynchronously. And once you've done that you can scroll down and click save changes, and then simply go to the top of your page and then click delete cache.

And once you've done this, you have now minified your JavaScript and CSS files along with your HTML files. Like I said, this can break your site, so do be sure to test it as well. So I'm

going to copy my website address, go over to incognito, and then do a search for my website. And I want to see how it loads. Make sure nothing's broken, there's no gaps, and as you can see, the site looks perfectly fine. And like I said before, if a site is broken, do just go back to your settings over here on the first tab, and simply de-select the middle one, which is going to be minified exclude the CSS and JavaScript files.

Section 9: How To Speed Up Your WordPress Website - Part 4:

How to speed up your website, part four. Use a cache plugin. WordPress pages are dynamic. This means they're built on the fly every time someone visits a post or a page on your website. To build pages, WordPress has to run a process to find the required information, put it all together, and then display it to your user. The process involves a lot of steps, and it can really slow down your website when you have multiple people visiting your website all at the same time. This is why I recommend every WordPress website should have a caching plugin.

Caching can make your WordPress site anywhere from two to five times faster. Here's how it works. As you can see from the image on the right, instead of going through the whole page generation process every time, your caching plugin makes a copy of the page after the first load and then serves that cached version to every subsequent user.

As you can see from the graphic on the right, when a user visits your WordPress site, your server retrieves information from my SQL database and your PHP files. It then puts it all together into an HTML document that is served to the user, and as you can see, it's a pretty long process.

When you use a caching plugin, you can skip out a lot of this process. There are a lot of WordPress plugins you can use for caching, however the two I recommend are WordPress rocket, which is a premium plugin, and WordPress Super Cache, which is a free plugin. Let's go over to my WordPress dashboard and I'll show you how we can set up the free version, which is WordPress Super Cache.

So I'm now over on my WordPress website, and I'm on the plugins tab, and I simply want to click add new and add the new plugin, which is going to be WordPress Super Cache as this is a free version. This is the one we want. WordPress Super Cache. I'm going to click install and then click activate. You know it's the right plugin as it's by someone called Automatic.

Okay, the plugin has now activated. So I want to scroll down and find it, and it's right here. WordPress Super Cache. Now I simply want to click settings, so go into the settings of the plugin, and as you can see by default, caching is off even though we just activated it. So make sure you have a caching on, which is recommended and then click update status. This will ensure your change has now been saved.

We can then move over to the advanced tab, and on this tab you just want to make sure you have the following boxes ticked. So the top one should be ticked, enabling caching. For cache

delivery methods, it should be simple, which is also recommended. For miscellaneous, you want to make sure you have disabled caching for logged in visitors. Again, this is recommended. They do have an option to compress pages, so to serve more quickly to visitors. You also want to make sure that this box is ticked as well, compress pages that are served more quickly to visitors. This box needs to be ticked as well. Three or four browser caching. This improves the site performance by checking if the page has changed since the browser last requested it. So that can save you a lot of time as well. So do make sure that is checked.

If you scroll down now into the advanced settings, the only one you need to have clicked here is going to be this one, which is extra home-page checks. This one is also very important, and as you can see it's also recommended as well. So once you've made these changes, you want to scroll down and click update status. So once you've done that, these changes will now be saved into the plugin configuration.

There are a few more options down here on the page. However, I don't ever use any of them. I just stick with the ones at the top. There's another option at the top called CDN. So if you have purchased a CDN, you might want to hook it up right here by enabling the CDN support. However, if you don't, then don't worry about that. Just go with avant and the easy settings. So once you've done that, you have now configured your caching plugin, and you are ready to go.

So as you can see, it's super simple and super easy, which is why I'm such a big fan of this plugin. If you do want to clear your cache manually, simply just go to the top and click delete cache, and then scroll down and click delete cache right here.

Super easy, right? One last thing you want to do is just to make sure you check your website in an incognito window just to make sure the plugin hasn't broken your site. I always do this for every time I install a new plugin, but as I said, it's even more important when you're using these plugins to optimize your site for speed as a lot of these plugins can cause issues on your site. This is primarily to do with the code you have on your website and potentially the theme you are using. So do be sure to check your website after installing these plugins. If a site does have an issue, then simply go back to your WordPress plugin and deactivate the plugin.

Section 9: Website Speed Optimisation For Cloudways Users:

If you're using Cloudways to host your website, Cloudways is one of the companies I recommended and showed in the web hosting and servers video in this section of the course. Then essentially you don't have to worry about points two, three and four, which is going to be your HTTP request, your minification and your cache. The reason being is when you host your website with Cloudways, it actually comes with a plugin which is called Breeze. So Breeze is a plugin that is actually built by Cloudways, as you can see right here and it has those free elements built into it. So if I go over to the settings for the Breeze plugin, we can see we've got a whole section here for minification. We've got a set in here for cache and we also have Gzip compression, which helps reduce the number of HTTP requests.

So as you can see, using Cloudways would make your life so much more easier as you have all the processes and all the things you need to do in one plugin. And as this plugin is made by Cloudways and it's for websites using Cloudways, you don't have to worry about your site breaking or anything going wrong, as a plugin works perfectly fine and is a pretty seamless experience. I haven't actually changed any of my settings since having the plugin activated. I've just left it on what Cloudways have set, and for me that has been perfectly fine. A good thing about this plugin as well is it is totally free. It does not cost you a penny as long as you have your site hosted with Cloudways, then you can use this plug in and get the full benefit of it. And just to clarify, if you did want to clear your cache manually, you simply go to the top purge and then purge all cache and just like that your cache has now been cleared from your website.